

EFFECT OF PARENT FUNDED SUPPLIES ON STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN PUBLIC DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITHIN KAKAMEGA EAST SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

In the case of funding education, families pay for the cost of personal items such as uniforms, pens, math tables and shoes among other things. Such costs are not covered by the government even if the policy states that education is free. The study sought to investigate whether the cost of personal effects affect the completion of secondary school education in public day schools. A descriptive research design was used to target a sample of 17 school principals, 21 Form Four teachers, 47 parents, 450 Form Four students and one Sub-Director of Education. Questionnaires, interview schedules, FGDs and data sheets were used to collect data. Data validity was determined by triangulation strategies while the reliability of data collection tools was established by means of re-testing. The study found that the cost of personal contributed to the non-completion of secondary education in public day secondary schools in Kakamega East Sub-County. Among household-funded supplies, more than 60% of the cost was contributed by three items; that is, language (English & Kiswahili) set books, stationery and uniforms. The cost of education may be lowered by lowering the cost of uniforms through promotion public-private partnerships to produce cheaper school uniforms.

KEYWORDS: Supplies, Public Day Schools & Kakamega East

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Proponents of Universal Secondary Education have always wanted to make secondary education cheaper and more accessible in developing countries. The intervention focuses on reducing the cost of education, however some significant costs in form of parent funded academic materials still exist (Akyemponga et al, 2007). Additional expenses include: a geometrical set, uniform, school bag, stationery, bucket and games uniform (Williams, 2013). In Kenya, the cost of such items is not covered by the government funding under the Free Secondary Education framework (Biwot, 2013). These parent obligations are variously referred to as indirect or hidden costs.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The initial entry into the secondary school does not guarantee completion of the four year cycle (Zeitlyn & Hossain, 2010). The additional costs adversely affect students from poor households. In the United Kingdom, families spend several hundred UK pounds on school levies that are not specified in admission letters (Ayodo et al, 2014). Additional academic programs such as educational trips are funded by parents/guardians. Families have to finance the corresponding costs resource such as workbooks, uniforms, computers and internet connectivity (Thompson, 2014). According to Ananga (2011) the additional costs constitute the push factors that terminate the learning cycle for students from poor backgrounds. This was evident in West Africa, the rural areas of Southern Ghana among families

that depended on the fishing income. The families struggled to provide basic needs such as school bag, shoes, stationery and even breakfast.

Similarly in the rural parts of Ethiopia, the Leki area, more drop cases from school were linked to the unreliable seasonal income. Interview with parents revealed that payment of school levies was a challenge poor households could not afford to three meals per day in the second half of the year, consequently, funding of educational requirements was postponed (Orkin, 2012). Whereas in Zimbabwe, students withdrew from school during the farming time, they engaged in child labor on farms in order to earn school fees (Chinyoka, 2014). In Tanzania, almost a third of the registered girls at secondary level drop out of school due to the inability of their families to fund tuition levies, uniforms, and stationery (Hunt, 2008). This situation was prevalent among students enrolled in the Temeke region (Komba, Hizza, & Jonathan, 2013). In Mozambique, Southern Africa, a World Bank study (2009) found that the cost of textbooks caused a substantial 50% dropout in secondary education (World Bank, 2012). In Kenya, the cost of family funded supplies limited completion of secondary education Masaba North District, Kisii County. A survey of 20 boarding educational institutions identified the additional levies outside the government approval as a barrier to retention and completion of secondary education.

Statement of the Problem

Over 10 years after the launch of the Free Secondary Education in Kenya in the year 2008, the problem of non-completion continues in Kakamega East sub-County (Onyiego, 2015). The substantial 31% non-completion rate by 2017 was 26 percent lower the EFA target of 5% by the year 2015 (MoEST, 2017). Persistence in non-complementary higher education is a major which if left unchecked, could negate the government's efforts toward attaining universal basic education. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the impact of the cost of parent funded items on the completion of secondary education in public day secondary schools in the Kakamega East Sub-County.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed methods approach which involved a blend of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Purposive sampling was used to select parents, students, principals and teachers. Four research tools were used in the research: document analysis, self-administered questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussions. The rigor of the findings was obtained using data from multiple sources. The triangulation of sources compensated weaknesses inherent in the data collection methods (Bulsara, 2009). Qualitative responses from interviews and FGDs explained the trend in quantitative data, this in turn that produced a thorough understanding of the situation.

THE FINDINGS

Gender of Respondents

Gender in each category of respondents was analyzed and visualized as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Gender of the Respondents

Category	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
School Principals	58.80%	41.20%	100%
Class teachers	61.90%	38.10%	100%
F4 Students	48.00%	52.00%	100%
Parents/Guardians	32.90%	67.10%	100%
Sub-County Director of Education (SCDE)	100%	—	100%
Source: Fieldwork, 2018			

The findings above show that indicate that the males constituted a majority of the respondents among school

Principals and Class teachers while the females were the majority amongst parents and students.

Price of Parent Funded Materials

The study obtained primary data from parents and principals; this approach was useful for verification of the information. The information was complemented by documentary analysis of admission letters and Principals' termly correspondence. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Prices of user items in US Dollars (\$)

School Serial	Uniforms	Set Books	Dictionary	Kamusi	Calculator	Math Table	Geometrical Kit
A	65	38	19	9	10	6	3.5
B	68	30	12	11	15	6.5	2.5
C	80	30	16	12	8	4.5	2.5
D	80	30	11	11	10	6	4
E	62	30	20	8	12	6	2
F	62	60	10	6	15	5	2
G	52	60	9.5	11	12	6	3.5
H	42	30	16	12	8	4	2.5
I	58	30	12	9	8	5	2.5
J	80	30	10	12	8	5.5	2.5
K	83	30	18	15	10	5	2.5
L	60	40	7	6	10	6	3.5
M	70	45	15	6	10	5	2.5
N	20	35	10	5	12	6	3.5
O	45	35	12	4.5	12	5.5	3.5
P	40	30	12	4	12	5	6.5
Q	20	30	15	5	12	5	3.5
Average	58.0	36.0	13.2	8.6	10.8	5.4	3.1
Perc (%)	34.4	21.4	7.8	5.1	6.4	3.2	1.8
Fieldwork, 2018							

Findings in Table 2 show that the price of school uniforms was the major contributor to the cost schooling, at over a third while the price of geometrical kit was the least at just below 2%. Interviews with the school Principals and parents revealed various reasons for the disparity in the cost of school supplies that were funded by parents/guardians. One principal explained the low cost of uniform in her school;

The Board of Management partnered with former students and NGOs to subsidize user items in order to assist the poor students. The donors provide materials for uniform while parents fund the cost of labour (Principal).

A female parent noted:

The community around here is poor. The parent has freedom to buy uniforms from anywhere (Parent).

On the same note, another Principal gave reasons for the high cost of uniform some schools:

..., a student with a single pair of uniform will be inconvenienced during the heavy rainy season (March – June), she is likely to come to school in dirty uniform. Additionally, having at least two pairs prevents theft cases and minimizes wear and tear (Male Principal).

From comparative observations, the study found that the difference in the cost of school uniforms was linked to the management measures taken by the administrators. For example, financial support from NGOs and alumni substantially

reduced the cost of uniforms. Similarly, allowing parents to get uniforms from cheaper sources regardless of quality contributed to lowering the cost of education. These findings were consistent with the results of Ngatia and Evans (2018) who argued that schools can utilize innovations within their regions to lower the cost of education to make education affordable for the students from poor backgrounds.

Impacts of Parent Funded Materials in Certain Classes

This study delved into the issue of user materials in certain classrooms to determine their contribution to the cost of education. Upon entry into Form 3, learners must have certain educational resources in order to participate fully in the teaching / learning program. A teacher indicated that:

Form 3 students must have Kiswahili and English set books and a scientific calculator in addition to the academic items used in form one and form two. Before the final KCSE exams at the end of form 4, the candidate should buy the latest issue of KNEC mathematical table (Teacher).

According to the students' focus group discussions, entry into the Form 3 class represented a large increase in the cost of secondary education with a negative effect on school attendance. Dialogue with parents and students revealed the struggle to comprehend the free secondary education as marketed by the government and politicians. Being absent from school due to lack of language set books and mathematical sets caused confusion on actual meaning of free secondary education. On some occasions, needy students failed to attend lessons despite being present in school, a frustrated student noted;

..., teachers are sometimes firm, you cannot attend a lesson in Mathematics without a calculator and mathematical set. ..., you stay out of class during the period but you are present in school (Female Student).

Similarly, another student concurred;

The three subjects; English, Mathematics and Kiswahili and appear on the lesson timetable daily from Monday to Friday. If you lack the academic requirements, no need to come to school Student).

Subsequently, the increase in the cost of education at the Form 3 class was still a major determinant of participation in secondary education. Lack of some academic items impacted negatively on lessons attendance when students were sent home to buy the items. These findings closely relate to the deductions by Asankha (2011) who observed that the cost of parent funded academic tools directly reduced student participation and completion of secondary education. However, purchase mathematical tables at the end of Form 4 prior to the KCSE terminal examination period did not affect completion, a Principal observed in an interview:

..., the learner should buy the latest edition of the KNEC math table for use during the KCSE exams which begin in October (Principal).

The foregoing dialogue shows that purchase of the mathematical table in October did not affect completion because students' registration for the KCSE examination took place earlier in the month of March before the requirement was enforced. This finding was supported by the findings of Grenzke (2010), that a flexible buying of academic requirements support retention of students because poor families are able to buy the goods at sustainable pace from their low earnings. Consequently, school administrators could utilize a program of allowing parents to source items in installments in order to increase school participation and completion of a given cycle of education.

Effects of user Items on Re-Entry

Findings from dialogue with students illustrated that lack of parent funded academic items negatively affected continuity educational participation. This mainly happened at the beginning of the subsequent school terms, particularly when the items were checked before re-admission. This was confirmed by a Principal's communication to parents;

..., many learners lack geometrical sets, math tables, pens, exercise books, language set books and calculators. Provide these items for your child next term. Your child will be allowed into school without full uniform and all the other academic requirements (Principal)

A disappointed student observed

I came to school in morning only to find a teacher at the gate inspecting the academic materials. Without some items you suffer the humiliation of standing outside the gate for long periods begging to be allowed in. Instead of this embarrassment, it is better stay home till you get the books and tools (Female student)

This approach of physically checking academic requirements before a learner was admitted for the subsequent term delayed educational continuation for students from poor families. This finding concurs with Amry et al (2019), who concluded that disruption of school participation is not just about finances, but a combination of internal school procedures with poor timing. Thus, some school procedures increase inequality in access to education and significantly contribute to school dropout (Amry, Masur, Batkhuyag, & Otgolkhagav, 2019). Similarly, Zeitlyn and Hossain (2010) support the argument that learners without some academic tools like books and geometrical sets attend school but undergo educational exclusion, the miss to attend lessons despite being present in school.

STUDY CONCLUSIONS

Despite the numerous interventions by the government of Kenya First, high non-completion continues in public day schools located in Kakamega East Sub-County. The failure to attain the EFA non-completion target is linked to the cost of parent funded academic items which raised the cost of education. The situation was aggravated upon transition to the senior classes of form 3 and form 4.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government of Kenya should abolish tax raw materials for school uniforms; it will reduce the cost of secondary education. Two, parents should be given freedom to purchase course books in languages (English & Kiswahili) at lower prices including second hand books so as to mitigate the high cost of education in the senior classes of form three and form four.

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